



## Hetch Hetchy Timeline

- **2 million-10,000 years ago** – Ice Age occurs, resulting in carving out the Tuolumne River Canyon into a glacier-formed, u-shaped valley, with a terminal moraine at the west end of Hetch Hetchy Valley.
- **Over 6,000 years ago** – Native Americans lived within the Hetch Hetchy Valley before the arrival of Europeans to this region in the 1850's.
- **1858** – The privately owned Spring Valley Water Company supplies drinking water to the city of San Francisco. However, disputes over water pricing and the cost to buyout the Spring Valley Water Company motivate the city to seek assistance in looking for water rights that it could own outright.
- **1876-1877** – George H. Mendell of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers surveys several bodies of water that include Lake Tahoe, Clear Lake, and the Mokelumne River. In his final report, Mendell recommends the Blue Lakes project on the Mokelumne River as an ideal source for San Francisco's drinking water.
- **1899** – State engineer William Ham Hall recommends the segregation of reservoir sites at Tenaya, Lake Eleanor, and Tuolumne Meadows as three potential sources of drinking water for San Francisco. During the same year, John Quinton of the U.S. Geological Survey issues a report mentioning that a reservoir in the Hetch Hetchy Valley could serve as an unfailing water source for San Francisco County. Both reports attract the attention of San Franciscan mayor James D. Phelan who contracts J.B Lippincott to conduct a private survey at both Hetch Hetchy Valley and Lake Eleanor. Lippincott estimates that constructing a reservoir in the Hetch Hetchy Valley would alone cost the city \$39,531,000.
- **May 29, 1900** – Because both the Hetch Hetchy Valley and Lake Eleanor were located in Yosemite National Park (managed by the Department of the Interior), Mayor Phelan inquired about the legal possibilities of gaining access to them. Mayor Phelan's inquiry was among several other's regarding the use of natural resources located within the boundaries of federally reserved land. In order to clear up the confusion, Representative Marion DeVries of Stockton, California introduced bill H.R. 11973 which would allow municipal use of National Parks.
- **February 15, 1901** – The Right of Way Act becomes law, which allows the Secretary of Interior to grant the right of way and use of federally reserved land to local governments without congressional approval. The majority of content from this act originated from Representative DeVries' H.R. 11973 bill.
- **October 16, 1901** – Mayor Phelan files an application with the Register of the Stockton Land Office for reservoir rights at Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley.

- **1902** – E.E. Schmitz replaces Phelan as the new mayor of San Francisco. However Phelan continues petitioning for the use of Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley as the primary water sources for San Francisco.
- **January 20, 1903** – Secretary of the Interior E. A. Hitchcock of the Theodore Roosevelt Administration denies Phelan's request for reservoir rights to Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley. A month later, Phelan submits a second request, this time through the County of San Francisco.
- **December 22, 1903** – Secretary Hitchcock denies Phelan's request for reservoir rights to Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley for a second time. This prompts San Francisco Attorney Franklin K. Lane to submit a petition for review.
- **1905** – Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot of the U.S. Forest Service recommends to personal friend and President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt that San Francisco should be granted reservoir rights. Pinchot advises that Lake Eleanor should be used first to its fullest capacity and Hetch Hetchy Valley should be used after that capacity is full. Consultant Engineer for San Francisco Marsden Manson also speaks with President Roosevelt regarding reservoir rights.
- **February 20, 1905** – After reviewing Lane's petition, Secretary Hitchcock denies San Francisco's request for reservoir rights to Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley for a third time. Secretary Hitchcock claims his primary reason for denying San Francisco reservoir rights to Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley is due to his obligation to maintain Yosemite National Park for recreational use only.
- **February 3, 1906** – The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passes Resolution no. 6949 that asks city officials to abandon their pursuit of the Hetch Hetchy Valley and to look for other water sources.
- **April 18, 1906** – A large magnitude earthquake destroys the majority of San Francisco. Several days afterwards the Board of Supervisors issues a solicitation asking to purchase existing water systems. Out of the 11 offers received, the Board of Supervisors selected the Bay Cities Water Company, whose operations are along the American and Consumnes River in the Sacramento Region.
- **May 18, 1906** – Chief Forester Pinchot writes a letter to Manson offering his assistance with helping San Francisco acquire reservoir rights to Eleanor Lake and Hetch Hetchy Valley.
- **March 5, 1907** – James R. Garfield (son of former president James A. Garfield) replaces Hitchcock as the new Secretary of the Interior. Shortly after this, Pinchot writes another letter to Manson suggesting that Secretary Garfield will favor granting reservoir rights to San Francisco.
- **July 27, 1907** – Pinchot's letter to Manson prompts the Board of Supervisors to ignore Resolution no. 6949 and proceed forward with a hearing regarding reservoir rights in Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley.

- **November 1907** – The Sierra Club encourages its members to send a letter of disapproval to President Theodore Roosevelt in regards to San Francisco's request for reservoir rights. The letter is endorsed by Sierra Club President John Muir and Board of Directors Joseph N. LeConte, William F. Bade, E.T. Parsons, and William E. Colby.
- **May 11, 1908** – Secretary Garfield grants San Francisco reservoir rights to Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy Valley with the stipulation that Lake Eleanor must be utilized to its fullest capacity before the Hetch Hetchy Valley can be used.
- **1908-1909** – The San Francisco Board of Supervisors decide they want immediate access to Hetch Hetchy Valley. In order to override the requirement of them having to use Lake Eleanor first as a reservoir, the city petitions Congress to override the 1908 Garfield Permit. After hearing from both San Francisco and members of the Sierra Club, Congress denies San Francisco's request for immediate access to Hetch Hetchy.
- **March 1909** – President William Howard Taft appoints Richard Ballinger as the new Secretary of Interior.
- **April 1909** – After differences in opinion among the board of directors concerning the Sierra Club's support for preserving the Hetch Hetchy Valley, Board Director William Colby starts a separate organization called the Society for the Preservation of National Parks. This new organization was created with the sole purpose of preventing the utilitarian use of natural resources located within national parks and contains most of the same board of directors as the Sierra Club including John Muir as the Society's president. Both the Society and Sierra Club correspond with and gain support from various environmental organizations across the nation such as Appalachian Mountain Club of Boston and the American Civic Association of Washington D.C.
- **October 1909** – John Muir gives President Taft a tour of Yosemite Valley. Shortly afterwards, Muir then gives Secretary Ballinger a tour of the Hetch Hetchy Valley.
- **December 11, 1909** – San Francisco newspaper the Call is outraged with a pamphlet that was distributed by the Society to members of Congress, other environmental groups, and the press. The pamphlet contained photographs of the Hetch Hetchy Valley and the Society's stance for wanting to preserve it. The Call claimed the information in these packets was false and that the Society was against the city of San Francisco.
- **February 18, 1910** – The Sierra Club officially supports the preservation of Hetch Hetchy after taking a poll to determine where each member stood on the matter. The majority of members (581 to 161) voted that the Hetch Hetchy Valley should remain unaltered and part of Yosemite National Park.
- **February 25, 1910** – After receiving letters from various environmental organizations across the nation, Secretary Ballinger adds a stipulation to San Francisco's reservoir rights originally granted to the city in 1908 by former Secretary of the Interior Garfield. The new stipulation requires the city to justify why the Hetch Hetchy Valley shouldn't be eliminated from the original permit.
- **May 25, 1910** – San Francisco's first hearing regarding its justification for using the

Hetch Hetchy Valley is extended due to a request from the Board of Army Engineers for the city to supply more sufficient evidence.

- **March 13, 1911** – President Taft appoints Walter Fisher as the new Secretary of the Interior.
- **September 16, 1911** – Secretary Fisher takes a trip to the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Among the Fisher's party is J. Horace McFarland of the American Civic Association, who supports preserving Hetch Hetchy Valley, and San Francisco city engineer Marsden Manson, who supports utilizing the Hetch Hetchy Valley as a reservoir. Both men explain their point of view to the Secretary during this trip.
- **1912** – Engineer John Freeman, on behalf of San Francisco, prepares a 401-page report supporting San Francisco's claim for Hetch Hetchy.
- **November 25, 1912** – After being delayed five times, San Francisco's hearing for its justification of acquiring Hetch Hetchy Valley commences. Six days later, the verdict is inconclusive and San Francisco is granted more time to submit additional evidence for its justification.
- **1913** – San Francisco submits additional evidence for justifying its use of Hetch Hetchy Valley.
- **February 19, 1913** – The Army Corps of Engineers issues a report stating that other sources of water are available for San Francisco's use in sufficient quantity and suitable quality and that building a reservoir in Hetch Hetchy Valley would be about \$20,000,000 cheaper than any other feasible projects.
- **March 1, 1913** – Secretary Fisher writes a letter to the city of San Francisco denying their justifications for using Hetch Hetchy Valley. Fisher also adds a new stipulation requiring San Francisco to seek congressional approval for its justified use of Hetch Hetchy Valley.
- **March 4, 1913** – President Woodrow Wilson appoints former San Francisco attorney Franklin K. Lane as the new Secretary of the Interior.
- **April 7, 1913** – Representative John E. Raker introduces H.R. 112 into the house, a bill that would grant San Francisco immediate access to the Hetch Hetchy Valley after corresponding with the city's Board of Supervisors.
- **September 3, 1913** – After hearings from both environmental groups and the city of San Francisco, the House of Representatives passes H.R. 7207 by a vote of 183 to 43, a similar bill that would grant San Francisco immediate rights to the Hetch Hetchy Valley. H.R. 7207 is introduced into the Senate as the Raker Act.
- **December 6, 1913** – After a week of debate between environmental groups, water corporations, concerned citizens, and the City of San Francisco, the Senate passed the Raker Act by a vote of 43 in favor, 25 opposed, and 27 abstaining.
- **December 19, 1913** – President Wilson signs the Raker Act giving the city of San

Francisco full access to building a reservoir in the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Construction of the O'Shaughnessy Dam begins the following year.

- **December 24, 1914** – John Muir passes away from pneumonia.
- **August 25, 1916** – The Organic Act is signed, creating the National Park Service agency with the mission to preserve all of the national parks for this and future generations.
- **May 1923** – Construction of the O'Shaughnessy Dam is completed, transforming the Hetch Hetchy Valley into the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir.
- **1934** – Water from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir reaches San Francisco.

## References

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